

3. (Twice amended) The process according to claim 1, comprising heating said liquid to a temperature of about 45-80° C prior to said contacting.

7. (Twice amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein said removal of said solvent is performed by the introduction of a drying gas heated to a temperature of about 55-170°C.

8. (Amended) The process according to claim 7, wherein said solvent removal provides a xylitol material dried to a free moisture content of about 0.1 to 3% while said xylitol material is still in a suspended state.

10. (Twice amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein said xylitol composition is allowed to settle on a moving belt and to form thereon a substantially continuous agglomerated porous powder layer having a thickness of about 0.5 – 5 cm.

11. (Amended) The process according to claim 10, wherein said conditioning includes treating said composition in said agglomerated layer with a drying gas having a temperature of about 50-100°C, for a time of about 10-180 minutes.

16. (Amended) The process according to claim 15, comprising recovering microcrystalline xylitol particles having a mean particle size of about 0.1 – 10 mm.

19. (Twice amended) The process according to claim 1, comprising recirculating microcrystalline xylitol particles having a mean particle size below about 0.2 mm.

24. (Amended) The xylitol product according to claim 23, having a xylitol purity of more than 80%.

26. (Twice amended) The xylitol product according to claim 23, wherein about 10-90% of the dry substance of the final product derives from a feed of solid microcrystalline particles.

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27. (Twice amended) The xylitol product according to claim 23, comprising particles having a mean particle size of about 0.1 - 2 mm.

28. (Twice amended) The xylitol product according to claim 23, wherein the size of the microcrystals in each particle is on an average below 50 μ .

Please add new claims 40 through 56 as follows:

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40. The process according to claim 1, wherein said liquid is an aqueous solution of xylitol having a xylitol concentration of about 50-77% by weight.

41. The process according to claim 1, comprising heating said liquid to a temperature of about 55-70° C prior to said contacting.

42. The process according to claim 1, wherein said removal of said solvent is performed by the introduction of a drying gas heated to a temperature of about 80-150° C.

43. The process according to claim 1, wherein said removal of said solvent is performed by the introduction of a drying gas heated to a temperature of about 90-130° C.

44. The process according to claim 7, wherein said drying gas is air.

45. The process according to claim 7, wherein said solvent removal provides a xylitol material dried to a free moisture content below 1% while said xylitol material is still in a suspended state.

46. The xylitol product according to claim 23, having a xylitol purity of more than 90%.

47. The xylitol product according to claim 23, having a xylitol purity of 98% or more.

48. The xylitol product according to claim 23, wherein about 30-70% of the dry substance of the final product derives from a feed of solid microcrystalline particles.

49. The xylitol product according to claim 23, wherein about 50-80% of the dry substance of the final product derives from a feed of solid microcrystalline particles.

50. The xylitol product according to claim 23, comprising particles having a mean particle size of about 0.15 – 0.4 mm.

51. The xylitol product according to claim 23, wherein the size of the microcrystals in each particle is on an average of about 10 μ .

52. A reduced sucrose-containing bulk sweetener wherein all or a partial amount of the sucrose is replaced with the microcrystalline xylitol product according to claim 23.

53. A non-cariogenic chewing gum comprising the microcrystalline xylitol product according to claim 23.

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54. A foodstuff composition comprising the microcrystalline xylitol product according to claim 23, wherein said foodstuff is selected from the group consisting of confectionery, bakery products, cereals, desserts, jams, beverages, chocolate, table top sweeteners, chewing gum, ice cream and dietary products.

55. A pharmaceutical, personal care or oral hygiene product comprising the microcrystalline xylitol product according to claim 23.

56. A process for the preparation of a pharmaceutical product comprising adding an effective amount of a substantially inert component, said substantially inert component acting as and being selected from the group consisting of a diluent, carrier, excipient and sweetener, and comprising the microcrystalline xylitol product according to claim 23.